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island already referred to,[1] and, through their co-existence with the overt patrilineal organisation shared by the Small Islands with Ambrim and with all parts of Malekula, have produced in the Small Islands also a sectional organisation not found elsewhere in Malekula. The result of this organisation on the megalithic ritual of the Small Islands is to divide the whole population of any given patrilocal village into the two groups already mentioned, each of which alternately performs the rite; and this rite is consequently of such a protracted nature that the cycle of ritual observances accompanying it takes almost a generation to perform, the minimum period in Vao being some fifteen years, followed by an interval of several more years before the resources of the community have sufficiently recovered for the other group composed of alternate generations in the male line to shoulder the responsibility of, and reap the honours due to, its repetition. In Atchin the minimum period is even longer, the ritual cycle there lasting about thirty years.

MEGALITHIC RITE CALLED MAKI

Main characteristics.

This main megalithic rite is in the Small Islands called *Maki*, and its counterpart throughout the whole mat-skirt area of Malekula is called by variants of the same word, of which the best known is *Mangki*,[2] as recorded by Deacon from South-West Bay. It is on the one hand a "mystery" in the sense outlined in the Preface, based, like all mysteries, on a ritual re-birth, of which the outward and visible signs are here the taking of a new name and lighting of a new fire on which, or from brands taken from it, the food for the re-born individual's sustenance must be cooked. As a rule, also, during the period immediately following the culminating act of re-birth the celebrant ritually becomes a child, in that for a minimum of thirty days he may not cook his own food nor leave the holy place where he has taken up his abode. During this period of spiritual as well as physical retirement, though his food may be cooked, with due precautions, by his wife, he abstains from sexual intercourse and observes many other taboos, one of the commonest of which is that he may not look on the sea. By these means he becomes at one also with the ancestral dead in whose footsteps through the observance of the rite he treads. The stone monuments he sets up are likewise erected not only for himself and, in the Small Islands, for all those who perform the rite with him, but also for those same ancestors who have performed it before him, and whose ghosts, together with his own after his death,

[1] See p. 5 and later on pp. 118 ff.

[2] In Deacon's posthumously published work this is referred to throughout as *Nimangki*, in which *ni-* is only the indefinite article and is therefore redundant. For other variants of this word see p. 692.

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The practical result of the performance, probably based on an acoustic principle that is beyond the range of my own knowledge, is that the length of the slit is made equal to the exterior circumference of the gong.

A fowl is killed and given, together with a live pig, as payment to the magician, and tidings are sent round to all the Vao villages announcing what has been done, the messengers taking with them to each village a message-yam decorated with croton leaves together with a single killed pig for which, being for food only, no sacrificial signal is sounded. This pig is called *masoamp*, a word of which I did not enquire the exact meaning, but is probably compounded from *mas*, meaning "provisions," and *oamp*, which, when applied in the form of *tamat-oamp* to the ghosts of men slain in battle, indicates absence of mortuary rites, in this case represented by the absence of the sacrificial signal. This pig is probably made the occasion of a *masean* feast, being one for which the recipients have not previously worked.

Skilled gong-makers hollow out the gongs, which are surrounded by a screen.

Skilled workers are now called for to assist in hollowing out the gongs. I will call them the gong-makers. These may be taken from any village and from either "line." Usually those who have previously worked at successful gongs are chosen.

A screen, called *na-lit*, is built inside the *ghamal*, and no one may enter it except those who are working on the gongs. Once the work has been started it must not be discontinued from sunrise to sundown, and to maintain this standard the workers are organised into shifts. When any one shift gets tired the workers composing it come out from behind the screen into the *ghamal* while the next shift takes up the uninterrupted work. While resting, the gong-makers are supplied with magnificent puddings. Not until nightfall may the work cease, and it must be resumed again before sunrise on the following morning. From the time the work is begun until the gongs are finished none of the workers may leave the *ghamal*, except only to relieve nature.

Restrictions imposed during hollowing out.

During this time no person of the home-village, man or woman, may have any sexual connexion, nor may they step over the buttress root of a *gha-tambol* tree, nor drink water, nor may they eat fish, nor the fruit of the *tawò* tree, nor anything that is roasted on stones. If yams are to be roasted the greatest care must be taken that there are no stones in the place where the fire is made. At the beginning of this period the list of these restrictions is publicly announced by the magician. All those subject to them are said to be *vel-val*, a word meaning "sacred" or "taboo." [1]

[1] See p. 400.

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These restrictions apply primarily to the Maki-men and their wives, for whom they are absolutely binding. Their application to other members of the village is not quite so stringent; if one of these, however, were to break, say, the rule against sexual intercourse, he would be careful not to handle any of the food that is to be taken to the workers. The restrictions do not apply to the married daughters of the Maki-men, living as they do in another village, but if one of these has sexual intercourse with her husband at this time she may not come into the home-village.

The gong-makers themselves are not subject to any of the restrictions on food, though the restrictions on walking and on sexual intercourse are implied in their confinement within the precincts of the *ghamal*.

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Expert "puts the voice into the gongs"; expert and gong-makers sound them, and others inspect.

From time to time the expert pays a visit to the *ghamal* to see how the gongs are progressing and to instruct the workers.

When he sees that the work is finished,[1] he appoints a day, about three days ahead, when he will come and "put the voice [2] into the gongs." The restrictions on the villagers continue to be imposed until this is performed. The gong-makers also remain in the *ghamal* till, on the day before the ceremony, they make ready for it by going down to the sea to seek a hole [3] in the reef on to which the waves break with a resonating sound. As the water splashes up from this hole they catch the spray in bamboos and conch shells, saying that they are catching the voice of the hole, and carry it back to the *ghamal*.

Next day the expert comes and goes alone behind the screen and, singing softly over the spray, pours it, and with it the voice of the resounding waves, into the gongs. Then he sounds the gongs in turn, giving four [4] strong strokes to each, so that everyone hears the sound and knows that the new gongs are finished.

Then all the gong-makers enter the screen, pay the expert with money-mats, penis-sheaths and other articles, and then sound the gongs again. Finally, the general public is admitted to inspect the gongs, though they are not permitted to sound them.

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Velal danced in rotation.

The gongs being now ready, the festivities leading up to their erection and subsequent consecration begin by the members of the introducing "line," followed by those of all the Vao villages, coming in prescribed rotation at intervals of several days to perform the preliminary circular

[1] I have no record of who carves the faces on the gongs. This work is presumably done by the expert himself.

[2] *halaghan.* [3] *hurum.*

[4] Four is the number most frequently used in magic; see p. 644.

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Mortuary Officials (*Talagh*)

The chief rôle in the mortuary rites for a *mer-sean* is taken by an official called *talagh*, whose main duty is the actual preparation of the body for burial. This man I will call the chief mortuary official. Certain other duties are performed by either one or more assistants, also called by the same name, whom I will therefore speak of as the assistant mortuary officials, though no such division of terminology exists in the native language. The word "official" alone will be used where the context makes it clear to whom it refers.

These men should be selected from among the members of the dead man's Lodge, but feeling is against the chief official being the own brother or son of the deceased. This may be because his intimate handling of the corpse would be too distressing to so near a relative; in any case, these relatives have too much to do to allow of their undergoing the confinement entailed. If a member of the dead man's own "Side of the Lodge" is not available for the office, then one will be chosen from the other "Side of the Lodge" belonging to the same Quarter.

All the mortuary officials sleep in the Quarter-Lodge (outside which the old man is buried) until the Fourteenth Day after death, when, after the launching of the canoe with provisions for the deceased, the duties of the assistant officials are over. The chief official remains in the Lodge till the performance of a special ceremony called *Tulagh*, or *Talogh*, when he makes his first public appearance and is paid for his services.[1]

Restrictions in regard to women.

There is no fasting for these men, but they may not have connexion with women for a year after the death of the old man, nor may they enter a woman's house (*ne-hime vavine*) during this period. During their fourteen days in the Lodge they may not be seen of women,[2] except by

years he had bled his fellow natives white by the practice of magic to obtain rain and wind. . . .

"He sent in his account in the form of a cycas leaf to all those concerned, who hastened to do him satisfaction by bringing all those pigs that they had been owing to him for so long. Stretched out on his mat, with tenderly appraising eye he surveyed this fine circle of pigs tethered around him, each at its stake. . . ." (Godefroy, I, 1933, pp. 245-6.)

[1] See pp. 555-6.

[2] According to one statement, this only applies to the chief official, the others being allowed to go freely on errands connected with their work. In Wala, none of them may be seen, except a special one called the "outside official," who maintains the necessary connexion with the outside world, such as going to the mainland to procure food for himself and his companions.

The only time when the general rule of seclusion is broken in Vao is when the mortuary officials (with the possible exception of the chief official) appear in public at the feast called *Matsan*. See p. 548.

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those female kinswomen of the dead man called *vene na woroan*,[1] who have married into other villages, and who at the news of death return to the home-village and spend a large part of their time in the Lodge with the mortuary officials. Thus, the two categories of women living in their own village by whom they may not be seen are (i) the unmarried girls, and (ii) all the wives of the male members of the village, though this latter category includes their own mothers, who keep them supplied with puddings.

A further restriction which applies only to the chief mortuary official is the prohibition against eating anything that has been touched by women (except his "mothers," who supply him with food), and a reciprocal prohibition against any woman eating anything that has been touched by him. The first thing he does on issuing from his seclusion is publicly to touch the yams which are to be distributed to the assembled guests, in order to demonstrate the removal of this restriction.

Duties of chief mortuary official.

The main duties of the chief mortuary official are:

(1) to prepare the body for burial;
(2) to place the morsel in the mouth of the dead man during the first feast of communion with him before burial;
(3) to conduct the subsequent communion rites held daily at sunrise and sunset until the Fourteenth Day after death;
(4) to blacken himself on the Fifth Day;
(5) to remain in seclusion till the ceremony of *Tulagh* or *Talogh*, when he is paid for his services.

Duties of assistant mortuary officials.

The main duties of the assistant mortuary officials are:

(1) to dig the grave;
(2) to deputise, if he so wishes, for the chief official at the twice-daily communion rites;
(3) to blacken themselves on the Fifth Day;
(4) to remain in seclusion till the Fourteenth Day;
(5) then to swim out into deep water with the canoe laden with provisions for the dead man.

Death and Burial

When a *mer-sean* dies, a taboo is placed on the fruit of such tree as is in season at that time. It is applicable to both men and women, and is not lifted till the morning of the first anniversary of his death.

[1] See pp. 133-4.

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The girl who had carried the pillow remains in the mother's village, where she must remain for a year, fasting (*taur*) and abstaining from sexual intercourse. This is the reason for the choice of an unmarried girl, since she would have less temptation to infringe the last of these restrictions.

On their departure the visitors are loaded by the mother's people with gifts of money-mats and yams.

Confirmation of this Vao custom comes from Atchin, with the additional information that the hut is constructed on the stone-platform erected during the second part of the Maki in the dead man's mother's village, and that his fan as well as his wooden pillow is deposited within it.

The account I received was in connexion with the recent death of a man called Melteg-ghirighiri-maki, who was Speaker of the Vao village of Togh-vanu. His mother was a woman of the Lodge *Melünbek* in the Atchin village of Olep, one of the twin-villages which, together called Ruruar, form the Superior Side of that island (she does not figure in my genealogy of the Lodge). This man was ill for two months before he died, and before his death he sent for Melteg-samen and Melteg-wes, both men of his mother's Lodge whom he called *natuk*, "son," and gave to each of them a live pig, the purpose of which I do not know, though it was presumably in order to ensure the correct carrying out of the programme in his mother's village. After his death, his mother's relatives from Olep went to Vao and killed three pigs.

The pillow, in Atchin called *no-ul-el*, carried on her back by the dead man's brother's daughter, and the fan (*ne-rib*) [1] are said to have been brought to Atchin, not on the Eve of the Fourteenth Day but on the Tenth Day after death. This, however, may be a mistake, owing to analogy with the patrilineal decimal system of dating on that island. The visitors danced the Rail dance called *Pila* (corresponding to the Vao *Pilagh*) from the beach at Onema through the dancing-grounds of Olep and Pweter-tsüts, to the house of Melteg-rum, the dead man's mother's brother, though this man was no longer alive, and his house was falling to pieces. Then they returned to the Olep dancing-ground called N'amal Para, where they built on the stone-platform a hut with rafters projecting in the manner called *tsin* ("bones"), and deposited in it the dead man's pillow and fan, and on the roof a woman's dancing-mat called *ne-tsal*.[2]

With regard to the cutting down of fruit trees in the village of the dead man's mother and the subsequent rewarding of the marauders, an amusing instance of the workings of culture-contact occurred during the recent celebrations connected with the death of Melteg-hangawul, of Togh-vanu.

[1] Made of a small coconut leaf with the fronds bent back and plaited into one another.

[2] In the Vao account, it is stated that the mat placed on the roof is a money-mat (*mangau*). The Atchin *ne-tsal* is equivalent to the Vao *ne-sal*, by means of which, according to the Vao account, the girl carries the pillow.